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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001655

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BNEULING  
OES/IHA FOR DR. DANIEL SINGER, REBECCA DALEY  
INR/GI RAYMOND LESTER  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN  
TREASURY FOR J. RALYEA, B. CUSHMAN  
PASS USTR FOR FLORIZELLE LISER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE TAKES CAUTIONARY APPROACH ON DETECTED  
AVIAN FLU

REF: A. A) SECSTATE 216147

[1](#)B. B) HARARE 1576

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Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Government sources confirmed that avian influenza (AI) was found in several ostriches in southwestern Zimbabwe had a strain of AI. However, further testing showed it was not the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain. A poultry quarantine and export ban had been initially imposed but was expected to be lifted soon. Embassy health officials are now represented on the two GOZ taskforces that are addressing AI control. So far, the GOZ appears to have followed appropriate, proactive procedures with respect to AI. End Summary.

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Non-Threatening Flu Strain Found

[1](#)2. (SBU) In response to reftel request, Poloff met with Zimbabwe Poultry Association President Peter Drummond on December 1, who mentioned that routine surveillance had detected several otherwise healthy ostriches in Matabeleland in southwestern Zimbabwe with the H5-typed AI. Drummond said further testing was being done but he did not believe it was H5N1 strain (see para x for post response to reftel.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ministry of Agriculture Director of Veterinary Services Dr. Stuart Hargreaves confirmed to post CDC officers the positive test results and said his service had notified the appropriate government agencies. Hargreaves said Zimbabwean labs could identify the H5 virus but not the particular strain (i.e. N1 or N2). He had therefore ordered further testing of the samples in South Africa and Europe. On December 6, Hargreaves office called CDC to report that the further tests had identified the AI strain as H5N2, not the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain recently found in Asia and Europe.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Pending identification of the strain, the GOZ had initially quarantined all poultry in Zimbabwe, effectively banning exports. According to Drummond, with confirmation that the strain was not the H5N1 variety the GOZ planned to announce a lifting of the quarantine on December 8.

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GOZ AI Task Forces

[1](#)5. (SBU) The GOZ now has two separate AI taskforces, one addressing veterinary control measures led by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the other addressing human and human-animal control measures led by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MOH). The MOH task force, in which post CDC officers participate, learned about the AI positive test results as a result of our inquiries. To improve communication between the two bodies, CDC sought and obtained a seat on the MOA task force as well.

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Response to Reftel Tasking

[1](#)6. (U) In response to post's inquiry on AI-related import restrictions (ref A), Drummond stated that the GOZ had not restricted the importation of poultry or poultry products, nor had the industry experienced a decline in consumer demand for poultry and/or poultry products.

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Comment

[1](#)7. (SBU) The formation of AI task forces by the GOZ and the precautionary actions taken by Hargreaves would seem to

indicate that the GOZ has been taking AI seriously and instituting the right measures to handle an outbreak. That said, bureaucratic coordination poses an impediment that we hope to help the Ministries involved overcome in the future.

SCHULTZ